



GET INTO COLLEGE

Useful Advice From



Ask For Teacher Recommendations



A letter of recommendation with your college application is important and selecting the right teacher or person to write that letter is equally important. How should you decide whom to ask to write your college recommendations? There is no "one size fits all." The teacher or teachers in certain situations that you select is going to vary. Asking the right teacher is a key component in providing a personal snapshot of you as part of your total application. You do not necessarily need to choose only teachers that have given you the highest grades. Here are some helpful selection suggestions:

- Choose teachers who are good writers, know you best, and who can speak to your academic and personal qualities.
- Ask a teacher from your junior year, especially if you've also had that same teacher early on in your high school career and have demonstrated a positive change in your academic skills. This gives a teacher the opportunity to write about your growth and transformation since he/she first taught you.
- Consider a teacher that you had in an unusually rigorous sophomore year class, such as Honors Pre-Calculus or an AP class. If that teacher worked with you in any other ongoing capacity and is familiar with your activities outside the classroom, that letter could be equally persuasive to reviewers.
- Did you ever take a course that you struggled with initially? Did you then go for extra help that resulted in significant grade improvement? Chances are that teacher can write a strong and meaningful recommendation for you.
- Choose teachers in core courses (History, English, Math, Science and Foreign Language), particularly if you are taking an Honors or AP course.
- Optional recommendations: Consider asking a coach if you have been playing on a Varsity team for a few years and they think highly of you. The same is true for Music and Art students. A minister is also an option.
- Each college has its own instructions for recommendations, so make sure you read them.

Keep in mind that you need to give a teacher at least a month or more to write a letter on your behalf - so don't wait for the last minute to start this process. When you approach a teacher to ask for a recommendation, be sure to ask if they are comfortable writing your letter and if they have the time. If they accept the assignment you need to help make the process easy for them. First give them your resume; that will serve as a reminder of all your accomplishments and academic achievements. You may also give them a graded paper that you wrote for one of their class assignments; one that has their own

comments right on the paper is a plus. You should also provide a large envelope, the forms that they need, and your college list - with the due dates. If colleges require that the letter be mailed, then you need to enclose stamped and addressed envelopes, unless your Guidance Office mails them in as part of their overall packet. In short, make this process as easy as possible for the teacher.

I recommend checking the box on the recommendation form that waives your right to read the letter. This allows the teacher(s) to write an objective and personal evaluation of you.

Finally, send each teacher a thank you note for writing the recommendation for you. They aren't required to write them, they are doing them because they are impressed with your achievements. Do it before they even write your letter of recommendation!

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